

YOUTH EVANGELISM CHALLENGE



MUSIC AT CHALLENGE — Bethany Barr Phillips of Tuscaloosa, Al., and her band perform Dec. 27 at the Youth Evangelism Challenge in A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton. Event organizers at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, which sponsored the event through the Mississippi Cooperative Program, estimated the crowd for the two-day event at 1,200, with 37 professions of faith. (Photo by William H. Perkin Jr.)

Miss. Baptist youth gather to hear Gospel challenge

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

More than 1,200 Mississippi Baptist youth thrilled to the high wire act of The Flying Wallendas aerial performance troupe and evangelists Gary Permenter and Bryant Bush taught from the Word at the Youth Evangelism Challenge Dec. 27-28 in A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton.

Bethany Barr Phillips of Tuscaloosa and her band provided music and worship for the annual event, which is sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) through the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

"We were pleased with the attendance — there was a good crowd in the coliseum — and the result was at least 37 profession of faith and a number of other decisions," said Don Lum, MBCB evangelism director.

Permenter is president of Gary Permenter Ministries, Inc., in Columbus. Bryant Bush is an evangelist and Christian musician based in Montgomery, Al.

"The greatest mission fields in America today are junior high and senior high campuses.



HIGH ABOVE — Tino Wallenda and his daughter of the famous "The Flying Wallendas" aerial performance family display perfect balance high above the crowd on Dec. 27 at the Youth Evangelism Challenge in A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton. Tino, a committed Christian and grandson of troupe founder Karl Wallenda, shared his testimony and Christian walk with the 1,200 attendees at the conference. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

The focal points of this year's YEC were to equip Christian students to reach their peers and to train them to use the new evangelism material produced by the MBCB Youth Evangelism Committee," Lum said.

The Youth Evangelism Committee, which is also respon-

sible for planning and implementing the YEC program each year, includes:

■ Shannon Slover (co-chairman), youth minister at First Church, Laurel.

see CHALLENGE on p. 9

Sudan authorities kill 11 Christians, arrest two priests

JUBA, South Sudan (BP) — Heightened religious persecution in the African nation of Sudan includes government bombings that have killed at least 11 Christians and the arrest of two Coptic Orthodox priests for baptizing a convert from Islam, Morning Star News has reported.

The Sudanese government dropped numerous bombs in multiple Christian villages in the last days of 2012, killing young and old, wounding others, and decimating property, according to reports by Morning Star News, a California-based nonprofit media outlet founded last year to report on persecution of Christians worldwide.

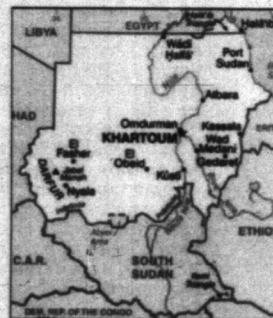
The attacks reportedly left ethnic Nuba Christians questioning the international community's silence over the persecution in the country's Nuba Mountains. Since South Sudan split from Sudan in 2011, ethnic Nuba in Sudan's South Kordofan state believe the Khartoum government is trying to rid the region of non-Arab peoples and Christianity, under the guise of quashing Sudan People's Liberation Army-North rebels, Morning Star News reported.

Khartoum, meanwhile, was the site of nine bombings that killed two Christian women, a 70-year-old and 45-year-old, as well as two siblings ages eight and four, Morning Star News reported.

In the year-end killing spree, the Sudanese government also bombed Eire village, killing five members of a Christian family, including a nine-month-old baby, two four-year-olds, a seven-year-old and a 60-year-old, and wounding another family member.

Separate government bombings killed a Christian civilian in Um Serdiba village and wounded a pastor in the town of Kauda. Other bombings destroyed property but spared lives, Morning Star News reported.

The news service also reported that the Khartoum government damaged an Africa Inland Church building in north Khartoum, deported a pastor and his wife, and refused to



allow the Lutheran Church of Sudan to record a Christmas message for its traditional television broadcast.

In another development reported by Morning Star News, Sudanese security forces refused to reveal the whereabouts of two Coptic priests arrested in December after they baptized a Christian convert who reportedly had kept her conversion a secret from her Sudanese Arab family for two years.

The arrests reportedly mark the first time in 23 years of the Islamic government of President Omar al-Bashir that Coptic Orthodox Church leaders have been arrested.

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JAN 18 2013



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

A memorial service

According to The Daily Camera newspaper in Boulder, Co., hundreds of citizens of that fair city recently turned out for a memorial service to mourn the victim of a police shooting and express outrage at the actions of the officers involved.

"He was part of the neighborhood," resident Bobby Brown told the newspaper in describing the victim. "It's sad he won't be coming back," George Pappageorge observed. "I know a lot of us have had a lot of anger, a lot of questions, a lot of uncertainty," said vigil organizer Jim Riemersma, who added, "We loved him. But I think he loved us, too..."

The hymn, Amazing Grace, was sung at the candlelight service, albeit with misquoted lyrics. Mourners brought their children and dogs to see the makeshift memorial and the photograph of the victim posted on a nearby tree. There were tears and hugs all around. Thus the people of Boulder — home to the flagship campus of the University of Colorado — came together as one to grieve and seek closure in the passing of... the Mapleton Hill bull elk.

You read right. There was a memorial service for an animal reported wandering through the neighborhood that had to be shot by police. Residents are sure it's the same bull elk that had sauntered into the neighborhood several times over the past two years. There is apparently some dispute over whether the animal was aggressive, as well as accusations that he was selfishly killed for the meat.

Nevertheless, the city is in an uproar over the incident. "People live here because we love the wildlife," Esther Parsons told The Daily Camera. "To murder an animal who feels like he's part of the neighborhood is despicable."

"He was a beautiful animal," Nancy Platt observed in the newspaper article. "He was hurting nobody. He didn't deserve what he got."

With the looming 40th anniversary of the dreadful Roe v.

Wade abortion-rights decision that unleashed the destruction of tens of millions of unborn babies across America, the story of the Mapleton Hill bull elk is just another illustration of just how insane our society has become and how brutally uncaring we have become toward our children. Would that the people of Boulder, as well as people all across this country, cared as much about the life of those millions of human babies as they do about the life of one bull elk.

In America, a person can go to prison for years for throwing a defenseless dog from a speeding automobile, but the abortionist who crushes the skull of a human baby accidentally born alive during a botched abortion is applauded as a hero of the Constitution. In America, it is a federal crime to even touch the egg of a bald eagle, but a human baby can be hooked and dragged, piece by precious piece, from the safety of her mother's womb with impunity.

In America, it is illegal to possess many animal parts such as ivory elephant tusks and antlers of rare beasts, but abortion clinics are allowed to organize disassembly lines to gut still-breathing aborted human babies so their parts can be sold on the open market for ghoulish experiments.

In Mississippi, learned religious leaders and other sophisticates nitpick every word of a Personhood Amendment and celebrate its ultimate failure, while claiming to be pro-life and proudly posting photographs on-line of their privileged children and grandchildren who were allowed the chance to live.

There's something wrong in Boulder, and there's something wrong in America. When we work harder to memorialize the life of an animal than we do to save the lives of our children, we are lower and more crazed than even the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And we already know what happened to them.

Unexpected

Christmas is the season of surprises. I hope you were surprised this year, but also got what you wanted. We received more than what was expected through the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering. Total gifts were \$2,103,665! That exceeds the goal by more than one hundred thousand dollars, and ends a four-year decline in giving that began in 2008.

We celebrate the goodness of God and the generosity of believers in participating churches all across our state. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Just as the Apostle Paul was surprised by the Macedonians' generous response to his appeal for an offering in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 8:1-7), we should be surprised by Mississippi Baptists' response this year. When we first chose the theme, "Unexpected," for the 2012 Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering, it had a nice ring to it and the supporting text from 2nd Corinthians carried a classic biblical appeal for generous giving, but I must confess that I had no idea it would result in the largest state mission offering ever given in Mississippi.

The national economy has struggled under the burden of stifling unemployment and dire predictions of fiscal collapse from Washington. Mississippi has never ranked high in wealth among the other states. Nevertheless, Mississippi Baptists have always been generous and our churches have always been faithful. The commitment of our people to "...first give themselves to the Lord" (vs 5) makes a remarkable difference in the outcome of our offerings.

The unexpected result is a renewed sense of confidence in the power of God's grace to enable us to accomplish more than we thought was affordable or reasonable given the economic circumstances. It's good to be surprised by God! He reminds us that missions is not just a dollars-and-cents enterprise, but also an experience of His unexpected presence among us.



Guest opinion
with David Michel

Let's see that we continue, as the Scripture encourages us, to "...excel in this grace of giving" (vs 7).

The Margaret Lackey Offering is the primary funding stream for key missional emphases like volunteer missionary mobilization and in-state church planting.

Community evangelism projects, disaster relief training, and cross-cultural ministries also benefit from state mission gifts. Our two state mission camps provide year-round leadership training opportunities as well as exciting residential summer experiences for youngsters.

Margaret Lackey is like the Cooperative Program's little sister and adds value

to what Mississippi Baptists are doing together in missions, Christian education, church leadership, and benevolence. The offering helps position us to fulfill the Great Commission appeal of Acts 1:8.

The theme for 2013 state mission emphasis is "UNLIMITED." Our experience from last year should give us confidence to know that our potential for effective ministry in Christ is UNLIMITED. The Apostle Peter reminds us that God's manifold grace empowers us to become generous servants in His Kingdom, and His Kingdom reaches to all generations (1 Peter 4:10).

Let's begin praying now for another demonstration of His UNLIMITED grace in this year's offering.

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Same sex marriage supporters seek big wins in 2013

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (BP) — Same sex marriage supporters enjoyed landmark victories in 2012 and are hoping for an even bigger win at the U.S. Supreme Court this year, but in the meantime political battles are brewing in at least six states where marriage redefinition bills likely will be considered.

Significantly, all six have governors who appear supportive of same sex marriage. Also, the November 2012 elections saw same sex marriage supporters increase their strength in the state legislatures.

Leading the way are Illinois and Rhode Island, where same sex marriage bills are being pushed and potentially could pass within weeks. Other states that likely will consider same sex marriage bills in 2013 are Delaware, Hawaii, New Jersey, and Minnesota.

Of the six states, all but one — Minnesota — have legalized same-sex civil unions, which grant all the legal benefits of marriage minus the name.

Nine states and the District of Columbia recognize gay marriage, while 30 states have constitutional amendments defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Last November, voters in three states for the first time in the nation endorsed same sex marriage directly through their ballots when Maine, Maryland, and Washington state approved it. Earlier efforts to legalize same sex marriage had come through legislation or judicial fiat.

Christ Plante, executive director of the National Organization for Marriage — Rhode Island, says bills in each of the upcoming states can be defeated, but it will require voters speaking out. The National Organization for Marriage has played a key role in defending traditional marriage on the state level.

"In all of these places, the most important thing is: Are voters speaking up?" Plante told Baptist Press. "Are people of faith calling their representatives and their senators in their statehouses and saying, 'Don't redefine marriage.' This is really up to the people. Legislators, in most cases, do in fact listen to their constituency. If a rep-



resentative gets hundreds of calls on this issue, they will take note.

"That's particularly what's going to need to happen in Minnesota, Illinois, Delaware, and Rhode Island, where we're in a defensive mode."

In Illinois, a same sex marriage bill passed a Senate committee in the final days of the lame duck session but didn't come to a vote in the full chamber before the session ended. With Democrats having increased their majorities in the state legislature, supporters are hopeful it can pass in the new session which already has begun.

Democrats control the legislature in all six states where same sex marriage is being considered. Traditionalists in Illinois are hoping more moderate Democrats from outside of Chicago can help defeat the bill, but Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn backs same sex marriage.

In Rhode Island, a gay marriage bill is favored to pass the state House, where House Speaker Gordon Fox, who is homosexual, said it is a priority. "We have a huge battle on our hands, with tons of pressure and tons of money coming

against us," Plante said.

Rhode Island is the only New England state where same sex marriage isn't legal. Plante hopes the bill can be killed in the Senate, where Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed is a bill opponent. Also opposing the bill is Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Michael J. McCaffrey, whose committee likely will consider the issue.

Paiva Weed and McCaffrey are Democrats in a state where the issues don't always follow political lines.

The Catholic Church's opposition to same sex marriage has been critical in preventing it from being legalized in Rhode Island in past years, Plante said. Supporters of same sex marriage tried but failed to defeat McCaffrey in a primary, Plante said. Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln Chafee, a former Republican turned independent, supports same sex marriage.

Legislatures have a legitimate reason to maintain the traditional definition of marriage, Plante said. "Marriage as the union of one man and one woman is unique because it's only the union of men and women that can bring forth children. Children

need a mom and a dad.

"That's why societies throughout history, across the globe, have supported marriage and protected it. This unique institution binds mothers and fathers to their children, and their children grow up in a stable home that leads to a respectable and productive next generation.

We understand that doesn't happen all the time, but that is the ideal and government has the duty to incentivize and support that ideal."

Following is a brief look at the four other states where gay marriage bills could be considered:

■ **Delaware:** Democratic Gov. Jack Markell said last year he believes same sex marriage is "inevitable" in his state. He also said he expects the legislature to tackle the issue this year.

■ **Minnesota:** When citizens defeated a constitutional marriage amendment in November, they also gave Democrats control of the House and Senate. With Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton openly supporting a bill, same sex marriage supporters hope to see it legalized in Minnesota in 2013. Sponsors have promised to introduce a bill.

■ **Hawaii:** Democratic Gov. Neil Abercrombie refused to defend the state's constitutional marriage amendment in court, saying he believed it was unconstitutional. A federal judge upheld the amendment in August but because of the unique language of the amendment, same sex marriage supporters still have a path to legalization. That's because the amendment did not define marriage but simply gave the legislature the power to define marriage in the traditional sense, which legislators subsequently did.

That means legislators in the state also could legalize same sex marriage.

■ **New Jersey:** Republican Gov. Chris Christie vetoed a same sex marriage bill in the past but some supporters hope to put the issue before voters, asking them to legalize same sex marriage. Christie has said he would be supportive of letting the voters decide.

Pastor withdraws from inaugural after criticism over sermon

WASHINGTON (BP) — The biblical standard that homosexuality is sinful has once again placed a Christian leader under public scrutiny, this time leading to the cancellation of Atlanta pastor Louie Giglio's benediction at President Obama's 2013 inaugural.

Giglio had accepted President Obama's invitation to deliver the benediction at the Jan. 21 inaugural. Obama had selected Giglio to pray at the inaugural that falls on the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, because of Giglio's campaign to end slavery worldwide.

However, Giglio withdrew from the program Jan. 10 after members of the pro-homosexual community complained about a biblically-based sermon Giglio delivered in the 1990s and labeled him anti-gay.

In the sermon titled, *In Search of a Standard — Christian Response to Homosexuality*, Giglio details Scripture that identifies homosexuality as sinful, and he

offers the hope of transformation the apostle Paul offered in 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Comments from the inaugural committee cast doubt whether Giglio's withdrawal was fully voluntary. "We were not aware of Pastor Giglio's past comments at the time of his selection and they don't reflect our desire to celebrate the strength and diversity of our country at this inaugural," inaugural committee spokeswoman Addie Whisenant said in a statement Jan. 10. "As we now work to select someone to deliver the benediction, we will ensure their beliefs reflect this administration's vision of inclusion and acceptance for all Americans."

Christian leaders quickly came to Giglio's defense. Russell Moore, dean of the school of theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the stipulation is indicative of a "state church."

"When it is now impossible for one who holds to the catholic Christian view of marriage and the



"I will continue to pray regularly for the President, and urge the nation to do so. I will most certainly pray for him on Inauguration Day."

Louie Giglio

gospel to pray at a public event, we now have a de facto established state church," Moore wrote in his blog, *Moore to the Point*. "Just as the pre-constitutional Anglican

and congregational churches required a license to preach in order to exclude Baptists, the new state church requires a 'license' of embracing sexual liberation in all its forms."

LifeWay Research indicates 44% of Americans believe homosexuality is a sin, said Ed Stetzer, LifeWay's vice president of research. "This Louie Giglio moment, and the Chick-Fil-A moment that preceded it, and the Rick Warren moment which preceded that, raise the question: Where do we go from here?" Stetzer blogged.

"Furthermore what does this mean for Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Jews, and so many more who believe that their authoritative religious texts teach something the prevailing culture finds so unacceptable that, even if they are working to eradicate slavery, they are no longer welcome in mainstream context?"

In announcing his withdrawal on the website of Passion City

Church that he leads, Giglio said his inclusion in the inaugural would place him in the middle of a fight not of his choosing.

"Due to a message of mine that has surfaced from 15-20 years ago, it is likely that my participation, and the prayer I would offer, will be dwarfed by those seeking to make their agenda the focal point of the inauguration," Giglio said. "Clearly, speaking on this issue has not been in the range of my priorities in the past 15 years. Instead, my aim has been to call people to ultimate significance as we make much of Jesus Christ."

"Neither I, nor our team, feel it best serves the core message and goals we are seeking to accomplish to be in a fight on an issue not of our choosing, thus I respectfully withdraw my acceptance of the President's invitation," Giglio said. "I will continue to pray regularly for the President, and urge the nation to do so. I will most certainly pray for him on Inauguration Day."

This is the true story of Dixie, the runaway dog, though the name has been changed so as to prevent further trauma to the precious pet. Although Dixie was not the smartest dog that has ever lived, she was deeply loved by most of her family. In spite of her limitations, she seemed to have one significant gift and that was to escape from wherever she was being fenced in. It was just a few days before Christmas when a tragedy occurred. While all of the family had gone off to work and to school, Dixie exercised her gift and she was gone again. Now she was smart enough to get gone, but she was not bright enough to know how to get back home. This escape seemed to be her final one because she had been gone for hours and there were so many busy streets and highways nearby. It was very likely that she had been picked up and carried off by someone or possibly she might have been hit by a car. So the family was braced to try and deal with the grief and sadness of the inevitable.

Every available person had been recruited to be a part of the search team and be on the lookout for Dixie. A door to door campaign began and a glimmer of hope was discovered as one of the neighbors had seen Dixie, but did not know who she was, or whose she was, and did not know what to do. In fact, Dixie had gone into her house, but when the lady had to leave she knew nothing else to do but let the dog back out and maybe she would wander back home. Now that might work for some dogs, but not Dixie. She was more lost than ever.



Directions

With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Prodigal Dog

A large sign was placed at the entry-way of the neighborhood. As darkness came no word had been heard from Dixie. Then the phone rang and a call came from a man who had seen the sign. It was a man who worked for a utility company and he and a friend had met Dixie earlier in the day. She had crossed over several streets and roads and made her way to a gas station. These two men, who were dog lovers, gave her some attention. Soon they had to leave and go to their jobs about a hundred miles away. They could tell that she wanted to go with them, and so they invited her to get in the truck and ride with them. Off they went nearly a hundred miles away to their place of work for the day. The possibility of her never getting home became greater, because if she escaped from them now so many miles away from home in that far country, they

would probably never catch her. Fortunately, she stayed with them and they had returned, saw the sign, and called the number.

Some of the family members jumped in the car, went over to where the men were, and lo and behold there was Dixie. The immeasurable sadness that was being felt immediately turned into indescribable joy. The beloved dog that had gone off to the far country was back at home just in time for Christmas. Life is so good when relationships are right.

When Jesus, the master teacher, told His incredible story of a Prodigal Son, He simply let the story fall on each of our hearts for us to see, hear, think, and experience as we would understand it in relationship to the events in our own lives. A thousand people can hear Jesus' story and receive ten thousand applications from the many streets and

roads in their own journey. Since I am not a master teacher, I would make just a couple of observations from the story of the Prodigal Dog.

First, everyone seems to have a tendency to get away from where they should be. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." As you may well know, sin is a word that means to miss the mark, go down the wrong road, or do the wrong thing. That is all of us.

The other observation I would share is that it is a wonderful thing when someone or some ones care enough to be looking for you. How many Dixie's are there in our neighborhoods or in our circle of life who are wandering around not knowing how to get home and no one takes the time to try to find them? The central focus of Jesus as He came to this earth is expressed by Him when He said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He has called His people to be a part of that same central focus and fashion.

The church is not just a group of people who gather from week to week to sing some songs and feel good about having been found. On the other hand, the church is God's designed search party to find and to help recover those who have run away, traveled a great distance, and do not know how to get home. God may want to use you with someone special around you to help them in their journey back to Him.

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WORLD NEWS

Report: Islamic extremism 'the prime persecutor' of Christians worldwide today

WASHINGTON (BP) — Islamic extremism, especially in Africa and the Middle East, dominates the latest annual report on global persecution of Christians. Eight of the top 10 persecutors of Christians — and 24 of the top 30 — are countries, marked by militant Islam, according to Open Doors' 2013 World Watch List released Jan. 8.

Meanwhile, North Korea, a non-Islamic country, maintained its hold on the No. 1 spot in the Open Doors list for the 11th consecutive year.

"Islamic extremism is the prime persecutor of Christians in the world today," said Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Open Doors' chief strategy officer, at a Washington, D.C., news conference. Among 24 of the leading 30 persecuting countries, "it is Islamic extremists, either in government or in violent opposition forces, that are the source of the persecution," he said.

The new list of the world's most severe persecutors of Christians includes five African countries that were unranked last year but reached the top 50 because of the impact of Islamic extremism: Mali (7); Tanzania (24); Kenya (40); Uganda (47), and Niger (50).

In addition, militant Islam in Ethiopia helped catapult that East African country from 38 to 15. The Muslim state of Sudan, Ethiopia's neighbor, jumped from 16 to 12.

The uprisings against totalitarian states in North Africa and the Middle East that began about two years ago have produced greater persecution for Christians, according to Open Doors. "The Arab Spring has turned into an Islamic Winter for the Christians in the Middle East," Boyd-MacMillan told reporters. "In every country where a regime has been deposed — such as Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Egypt — Islam is still in power and putting pressure on the Christian minority."

The top 10 countries on Open Doors' latest World Watch List, which covered No-

vember 2011 through October 2012, are: (1) North Korea; (2) Saudi Arabia; (3) Afghanistan; (4) Iraq; (5) Somalia; (6) Maldives; (7) Mali; (8) Iran; (9) Yemen, and (10) Eritrea.

Syria, which is torn by civil war as a result of an Arab Spring-like conflict fueled by militant Muslims, jumped from 36 to 11 this year.

North Korea far outranked the other persecutors on the list with a score of 87 points, making it the only country to achieve "absolute persecution," which is reserved for scores of 86 to 100. Saudi Arabia was second with 75.

Christian persecution in North Korea, which practices Communism and the cult-like worship of the ruling Kim family, has been "slightly worse" since Kim Jong Eun succeeded his late father in December 2011, Boyd-MacMillan reported.

Kim sent about 100 assassins into China to kill people who were evangelizing North Korean refugees, he said.

"The worship cult is basically still going strong," Boyd-MacMillan said.

The North Koreans continue to imprison from 50,000 to 70,000 followers of Christ in Auschwitz-like labor camps, but Christians in the country number from 200,000 to 400,000, according to Open Doors.

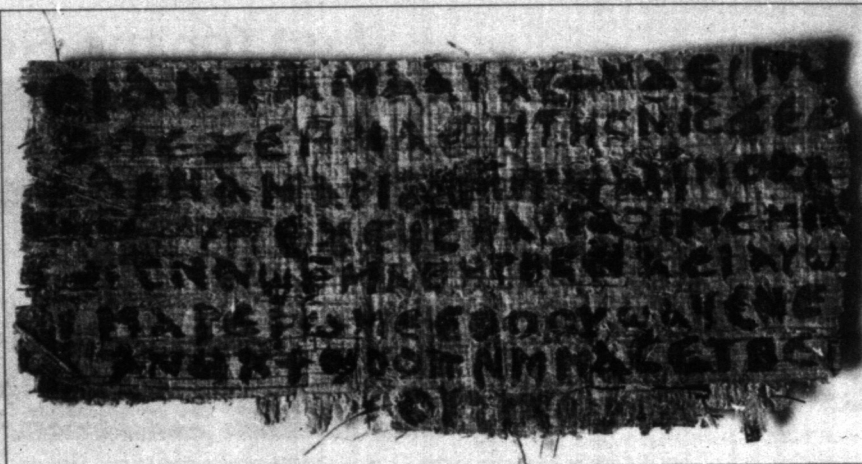
Iran, ranked eighth, has an estimated 450,000 Christians despite the country's militant Islamic regime, reported Open Doors, which serves the persecuted church.

"Persecution usually occurs because the church is a genuine threat to evil," Boyd-MacMillan said. "Otherwise it can safely be ignored. Jesus said, 'Love your enemies.' He didn't say, 'Don't make any.' And all over the world millions of nameless Christians are standing up and making an enemy of unjust ideologies, cruel dictators... And without this tidal wave of loving defiance, the world would be an awful place. And from this loving defiance, growth comes and hope stays strong."

"Persecution usually occurs because the church is a genuine threat to evil. Otherwise it can safely be ignored. Jesus said, 'Love your enemies.' He didn't say, 'Don't make any.'"

Ron Boyd-MacMillan

Open Doors' chief strategy officer



Doubts continue to rise over 'The Gospel of Jesus' Wife'

NASHVILLE (BP) — Harvard University Professor Karen King has hit another snag in her efforts to publicize a papyrus fragment on which she says Jesus refers to a "wife," as the Harvard Theological Review has postponed publication of her anticipated article while awaiting the results of further testing.

The Review was to publish in January a major article aimed at answering questions raised about the authenticity of the fragment, after King announced last September its discovery at an international conference of biblical scholars in Rome.

King, the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, said the article is postponed because testing on the fragment is not complete, according to news reports. The postponement is believed to further discredit the fragment's authenticity, which academics and theologians have questioned.

Harvard Divinity School spokesperson Kathryn Dodgson said the undisclosed owner of the fragment is making arrangements for further testing on its origin and authenticity, including "testing by independent laboratories with the resources and specific expertise necessary to produce and interpret reliable results," CNN reported.

The Review has posted a provisional draft of King's article on its website and plans to publish a finalized version after testing is complete, CNN reported.

"Until testing is complete, there is nothing more to say at this point," Dodgson said in the CNN story. Last October, the Smithsonian Channel delayed release of a film about the fragment,

awaiting further testing.

The fragment as translated only includes portions of sentences, one of which is interpreted as, "... Jesus said to them, 'My wife...,'" the Review reports.

Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ, God incarnate, lived on earth in the first century A.D. as a single, celibate teacher for approximately 33 years before His crucifixion on the cross and His resurrection.

King, who dubbed the text of the fragment as The Gospel of Jesus' Wife, has never presented the fragment as proof of any claim that Jesus was married. On the Review's website King writes the "fragment does not provide evidence that Jesus was married."

The fragment's fourth-century dating "argues against its value as evidence for the life of the historical Jesus," King writes, but also posits there is no "reliable historical evidence to support the claim that (Jesus) was not married..."

The papyrus fragment, smaller than a business card, includes eight lines of handwritten text in the Coptic language. Derived from the Greek alphabet, Coptic is essentially the Egyptian language represented with an alphabet rather than hieroglyphics.

Some who have commented about the fragment note a strong resemblance to the non-canonical Gnostic manuscript known as the Gospel of Thomas.

Francis Watson of Durham University and Simon Gathercole of Cambridge have pointed out what they believe are tell-tale signs of forgery. Watson, in a paper posted online at www.markgoodacre.org/Watson.pdf, argues that the text appears to be constructed by a modern au-

thor rather than an ancient native Coptic speaker.

"Watson shows how the fragment looks as if a forger took snippets of quotations from various Coptic sources — mostly the Gospel of Thomas — and patched them together," Leonard said. "Indeed, one line of the fragment 'coincidentally' ends at the same place where the text is broken off in the corresponding line of the only extant manuscript of the Gospel of Thomas."

Simon Gathercole at Cambridge sees another reason for concern: the most inflammatory statement in the manuscript is squarely in the center of the fragment. While the shocking statement is in the middle, key explanatory information is missing because of where the document is torn.

Bill Warren, New Testament professor and director of the Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies at New Orleans Seminary, has followed the discussion about the new discovery. Warren said the "clean cuts" and careful framing of "my wife" without the surrounding words to provide context creates suspicion about the document's authenticity.

"If we assume that the fragment is authentic, the placement of the main statement being discussed about Jesus saying 'my wife' right in the center of the fragment is at best suspicious, and the lack of a fuller context for knowing what exactly was being said lends itself to speculations that may be far off the mark if only a fuller context was known," Warren said in September.

"For example, was Jesus answering a question about 'my wife' and so used the wording from the questioner? We simply don't know the context."

Just for the Record



FREEDOM CHURCH, LAUREL, ordained Steve Ishee as deacon. Shown are pastor Tommy Davis, Ishee, and Lisa Ishee.



The children of **NESHOPA CHURCH, UNION**, performed A Light Has Come for their Christmas program.



UNION CHAPEL CHURCH, CAGLE'S CROSSING, ordained Harold Burgess as deacon Jan. 6. Shown are Reggie Howell, Mrs. Harold Burgess, Burgess, and pastor Dan Sandlin.



FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, STARKVILLE, ordained Justin Chambers, John Kemp, and Scott Beasley as deacons recently. Shown are Chambers, Kemp, pastor Dickie Bryan, and Beasley.



LAKESHORE CHURCH, JACKSON, presented Worthy of Worship Dec. 9 during the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

In other Church News:

➤ **First Church, Sharon, Laurel**, is hosting the 2013 Mississippi Bible prophecy conference Feb. 1-2. Fri., 6 p.m.; Sat. 9 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; Speakers, Dave Reagan, Al Gist, Don McGee, and Jeff LaBorg; worship leader, Tory Dardar; love offering.

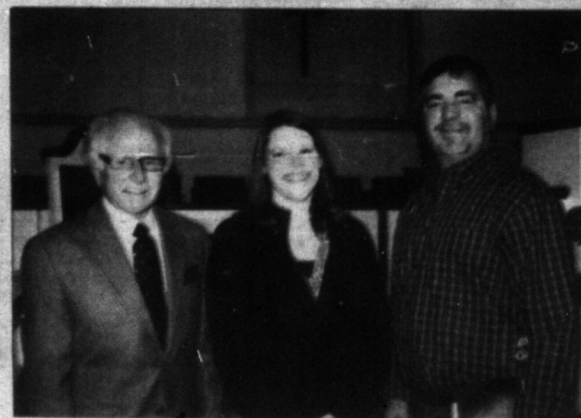
➤ **Ramah Church, McCall Creek**, is presenting a January Bible Study Jan. 27-30; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Huey Moak, speaker; Lonnie J. Case, pastor.

➤ **First Church, Runnelstown**, will host The McKameys in concert Jan. 24, 7 p.m. Love offering.



The children's choir of **GOSS CHURCH, COLUMBIA**, presented The Great Christmas Giveaway Dec. 9. Alicia Bass and Cherie Rayborn, directors.

EAST COLUMBIA CHURCH, TRICOUNTY ASSOCIATION, ordained Charlie Alexander and Bobby Greer as deacons. Shown are Alexander, Greer, and pastor Tim Morrison.



ECRU CHURCH, PONTOTOC ASSOCIATION, exceeded their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$6500 by collecting \$10,887. Shown are transitional pastor Tom Sumrall, Abigail McMillen, and Charle Stubblefield.

Seminary News

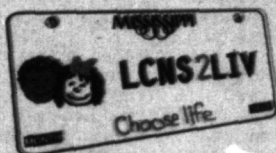


Doctoral graduates from **NEW ORLEANS SEMINARY**: Tim Mims, senior pastor of Pine Grove Church in Picayune, earned the doctor of philosophy degree; Tim Parker, Senior Pastor of New Hope Church Foxworth, earned the doctor of ministry degree; Robert "Jack" Manor, planting pastor at Harvest Point Church in Kosciusko and Grace Fellowship in Lexington, earned the doctor of philosophy; and Greenville native Jeff Box, pastor of Walker Church in Monroe, Ga., earned the doctor of educational ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Dec. 15, 2012. Picture from left to right: Mims, Parker, NOBTS President Chuck Kelley, Manor and Box.

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Pastors in Iran face continual threats of arrest, beatings, death

TEHRAN (BP) — Saeed Abedini, an Iranian-American pastor currently imprisoned in Iran, is being threatened with death as the country continues its longstanding pressures against Christians, according to a U.S. organization advocating in Abedini's behalf.

The Iranian-born Abedini, a U.S. citizen who planted a network of house churches in Iran, was imprisoned last September and recently indicted on secret charges. According to the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), Abedini's case was handed to Iranian Judge Pir-Abassi, known as one of the country's "hanging judges" for the number of people he has sent to their deaths.

Also languishing in prison in Iran are attorney Mohammed Ali Dadkhah and pastor Benham Irani.

The ACLJ reported Jan. 10 that Abedini had released a letter to his family members in Iran describing his ordeal. "The life of Pastor Saeed is in grave danger," Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the ACLJ, said in a news release. "When you read Pastor Saeed's own words, you understand that Iran has absolutely no regard for human rights and religious freedom."

In his letter, a copy of which was posted by the ACLJ, Abedini writes of sleeping in a room with a bright light constantly lit, blurring day and night, and of the difficult process by which he says God is making him a godly man.

"It is a hard process of warm and cold to make steel," Abedini wrote. "This is the process in my life today: one day I am told I will be freed and allowed to see my family and kids on Christmas (which was a lie) and the next day I am told I will hang for my faith in Jesus. One day there are intense pains after beatings in interrogations, the next day they are nice to you and offer you candy. These hot and cold days only make you a man of steel for moving forward in expanding His Kingdom."

Abedini also wrote of the joy he felt when he heard how Christians around the world were supporting him, and that other prisoners were "shocked" by the love followers of Jesus showed each other.

"I told them how in the Bible we are all considered brothers and sisters (despite race, color, or nationality) and we are to share in each other's pains," Abedini wrote. "This comes from our Lord. The Word of God says that when we are persecuted for our faith we are to count it all joy. When I think that all of these trials and per-

secutions are being recorded in heaven for me, my heart is filled with complete joy."

The Iranian government does not recognize Abedini's U.S. citizenship, the ACLJ says, which he gained in 2010 by marriage to his American wife with whom he has two children. Abedini had traveled back and forth from Iran freely until his arrest. The ACLJ, which represents his wife and children who reside in the U.S., claims the U.S. State Department has done little to help the pastor.

"We continue to press the Obama Administration to engage this case — to speak out forcefully on Pastor Saeed's behalf and put pressure on Iran's allies to free this American," Sekulow said in the ACLJ's news release. "Time is of the essence."

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), a British religious rights organization, meanwhile reported on Jan. 7 that prominent Iranian human rights attorney Mohammed Ali Dadkhah, who led in securing the release of Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani from prison, was jailed and disbarred for 10 years in September 2012, and his health is deteriorating.

Dadkhah had faced the prospect of imprisonment for more than a year.

"Moreover, official attempts to justify his imprisonment by attempting to coerce an 'on air' confession are not only reprehensible, but are also clear indications that the charges levelled against him were spurious," Mervyn Thomas, CSW's chief executive, said in a statement on the group's website.

"CSW calls for the immediate release of Mr Dadkhah and for an end to the campaign of harassment of civil society."

International Christian Concern (ICC), a Washington advocacy group for the persecuted church, meanwhile has kept its spotlight on the plight of pastor Benham Irani, who since his 2011 arrest has suffered severe health problems due to beatings by Iranian prison authorities and other cellmates and has been denied medical treatment.

Serving a six-year sentence for "acting against the interests of national security," Irani wrote a letter from his prison cell to fellow Christians, ICC reported, speaking of his love and faith despite his suffering.

"My brothers and sisters, I love you all," Irani wrote. "Christ has given you to me on Calvary. Even if I were sentenced to many years behind bars for the salvation of one of you, there would never be any complaint."

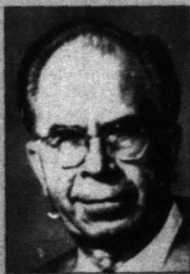
OBITUARIES

Leon Emery, 93, retired pastor and former department director at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson, died December 23 at Hospice Ministries in Ridgeland. A native of South Carolina, Leon was a decorated veteran of World War II having served in the U.S. Army in the Pacific Theater. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1950 and pastored churches in South Carolina and Mississippi. From 1963-84, he was a consultant in the MBCB Cooperative Missions Department and was later named director of the MBCB Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department. He was a licensed pilot and served as Chaplain of the Mississippi Wing of the Civil Air Patrol. He received degrees from North Greenville University in Tigerville, S.C., and Mississippi College in Clinton, and attended New Orleans Seminary. He also received the Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from North Greenville University. Survivors include his wife of 71 years, Jessie; his children Ron (Cindy) Emery and Sharon (Michael) Harden; four grandchildren; two great grandchildren; his brother Arnold (Pauline) Emery; and sister, Mazie Gosnell. He was preceded in death by a son, Darrell Lee Emery; his parents, John and Minnie Emery; brothers Albert and Verner; and sister Daisy Dill. Funeral service was held December 28 at Wright and Ferguson Funeral Home on Highland Colony Parkway in Ridgeland, with Carl Savell officiating. Interment was at Parkway Memorial Cemetery in Ridgeland. Wright and Ferguson Funeral Home in Ridgeland was in charge of arrangements.



EMERY

Harry Llewellyn Raley, 87, retired missionary and former prayer coordinator for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), died Jan. 4. He attended Berry College in Georgia before entering the U.S. Navy during World War II. During the war, he felt God's call to the ministry. He earned a B.A. from Furman University in Greenville, S.C., in 1948, and a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth in 1951. He and his wife Frances served in churches in North and South Carolina before they were appointed as missionaries with the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) of the Southern Baptist Convention, serving in Taiwan from 1954-91. He also served as MBCB prayer coordinator from 1996-2009. Raley was born August 14, 1925, in Bethune, S.C., and preceded in death by his parents Lewis Raley and Lola Blackmon Raley, and sisters Elizabeth Byrd, Ruth Rodgers, and Lois Dease. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Frances Bibb Raley of Clinton; son Harry L. Raley Jr. (Lynn) and wife Rachel Heard of Jackson; son Bruce Raley and wife Pamela Sadler Raley of Houston, Texas; son David Raley and wife Frances Usrey Raley of Benton, Ark.; daughter Beth Raley Harris and husband Scott Harris of Nashville; six grandchildren; and four great grandchildren. Funeral service was Jan. 9 at Alta Woods Church, Jackson, with interment at Lakewood Memorial Park, Clinton. Wright and Ferguson Funeral Home in Clinton was in charge of arrangements.



RALEY

September 19, 1921, in Kansas City, Mo., to Carl Alfred McIntire Sr. and Flossie Jones McIntire. He spent his childhood in Missouri. He graduated from William Jewell University in Liberty, Mo., and New Orleans Seminary. McIntire was preceded in death by his parents; his wife of nearly sixty years, Maelen Neil McIntire; and a brother, Carl A. McIntire, Jr. He is survived by his son Russell M. McIntire, Jr., and wife Suzan; two grandchildren; four great grandchildren; and sister, Grace Coen. Wright and Ferguson Funeral Home in Clinton was in charge of arrangements.

Thomas Alvin Bruce, 66, pastor of Yale Street Church in Cleveland, died Jan. 6 at University Medical Center in Jackson. Bruce surrendered to preach on April 19, 1992, and in addition to Yale Street Church served Trinity Church in Rosedale, Bethany Church in Merigold, Philip Church in Philip, Cascilla Church in Cascilla. He was born in Humphreys County on October 25, 1946, to John Bayliss Bruce Jr. and Rena Mae Morris Bruce, who preceded him in death as well as a brother, Steve L. Bruce. He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Glenda G. Bruce of Cleveland; daughter, Katrena Bruce McDaniel (Troy) of Greenwood; two grandchildren; and brother, Kenneth I. Bruce (Kay) of Nashville. A Celebration of Life Service was held Jan. 9 at Ray Funeral Home in Cleveland, with Eugene Walden officiating. Interment was at Drew City Cemetery. Ray Funeral Home in Cleveland was in charge of arrangements.



BRUCE

Daniel W. Stroud Sr., 92, retired pastor and educator, died December 29. He was a retired pastor of Friendship Church, West, and retired school administrator at Crowder Junior High School. Stroud was a member of Lyon Church, Lyon, where his son Joel is pastor. The elder Stroud served schools and churches in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. He is survived by his wife, Gwendolyn Shotwell Stroud of Clarksdale; daughters, Jo C. Stroud of Half Moon Bay, Ca., and Cathy Stroud Malavasi of Hernando; sons, Joel R. Stroud of Lyon, Daniel W. Stroud Jr. of Franklin Springs, Ga.; seven grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. Funeral service was Dec. 30 at Lyon Church, with interment in Memorial Garden Cemetery in Clarksdale. National Funeral Home in Clarksdale was in charge of arrangements.

Russell M. McIntire Sr., 91, retired pastor and denominational worker, died January 5 in Clinton. He served numerous churches in Louisiana and Mississippi during his nearly 70-year career as a Baptist pastor. After serving at First Church, Clinton, for more than twenty years, he served as director of development for New Orleans Seminary. He returned to the pastorate for several years until he retired in 1987 and returned to Clinton. McIntire was born



MCINTIRE

J.B. Betts Jr., 84, retired music minister, died January 8 in Heber Springs, Ark. He was born June 11, 1928. Betts was in full time music ministry for over fifty years, serving in churches in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas. His evangelistic work took him all over the country and countries abroad. He is survived by his wife of sixty years, Marion Elaine Syvertsen Betts; daughters Melinda Betts and Marsha Lacy, both of Heber Springs, Ark.; Mary Turner of Collierville, Tn., and Melody Sims of Cleveland, Tn.; and sons Jerry Betts of Keller, Texas, and James Michael Betts; nineteen grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. Funeral service was Jan. 12 at Sugarloaf Church in Heber Springs, Ark.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

FATZHA OEAWH TGDA OEA LAZLVA

PEGVV FA CIDE LGWXAS: GVV TGDAP

PEGVV RGOEAH FVGDBXAPP.

QZAV OMZ: PWU

Clue: P = S

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Daniel Four: Two

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

MS POSITIONS

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PINE GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL "ASSOCIATE PASTOR/YOUTH MINISTER." Please send resume to Pine Grove Baptist Church, 124 Gather Johnson Rd., Magee, MS 39111.

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PLAINWAY BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A PART TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR/ MINISTER. If interested please send resume to Plainway Baptist Church at 1133 Hwy. 15 North, Laurel, MS 39440 or send to the e-mail address plainwaybaptistchurch@plainwaybaptistchurch.com or call the church between 8 and noon at 601-426-6505.

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Hobby Lobby continues fight against contraceptive mandate

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — Hobby Lobby says it has found a way to avoid for "several months" being penalized by the federal government for refusing a mandate to provide abortion-inducing drugs free of charge in its employee health care plans.

Beginning Jan. 1, Hobby Lobby reportedly was facing fines of around \$1.3 million per day for defying the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' abortion/contraceptive mandate. Jan. 1 was the date its new employee health care plan was to take effect.

Peter M. Döbelbower, an attorney and vice president for Hobby Lobby, said in a Jan. 10 statement that the date had been delayed, although he didn't provide specific details.

"Hobby Lobby discovered a way to shift the plan year for its employee health insurance, thus postponing the effective date of the mandate for several months," Döbelbower said. "Hobby Lobby does not provide coverage for abortion-inducing drugs in its healthcare plan. Hobby Lobby will continue to vigorously defend its religious liberty and oppose the mandate and any penalties."

Hobby Lobby eventually could face fines despite the fact that for-profits have a re-

cord of nine wins and five losses in federal court against the mandate, according to a tally by the legal group Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

Hobby Lobby, the largest business to sue the government over the issue, is among the four for-profits to have lost in court. So far, each of the nine victories has been limited to the specific business that sued, although if those wins stand on appeal, Hobby Lobby may be covered.

Under the mandate, businesses and even some religious organizations are required to carry employee insurance that covers contraceptives, including emergency contraceptives such as Plan B and ella that can kill an embryo after fertilization and even after implantation. Pro-lifers consider that action a chemical abortion.

After a federal judge in November ruled Hobby Lobby must cover the drugs, Becket unsuccessfully appealed to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals and to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who oversees emergency appeals from the Tenth Circuit.

Sotomayor did say the lawsuit could proceed in the lower court and then be appealed back to the high court at the appropriate time.

The Hobby Lobby suit also includes Mardel, a Christian bookstore chain. The same family, the Greens, owns both of them.

"These abortion-causing drugs go against our faith, and our family is now being forced to choose between following the laws of the land that we love or maintaining the religious beliefs that have made our business successful," David Green, Hobby Lobby's founder and CEO, said in September. "...We simply cannot abandon our religious beliefs to comply with this mandate."

In total, there have been 43 lawsuits against the mandate. Many of them involve religious organizations such as Christian colleges and universities.

The mandate was announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in August 2011 as part of the health care law championed by President Obama. Although the Supreme Court upheld the health care law last June, the justices' ruling did not deal with the religious liberty issues surrounding the abortion/contraceptive mandate.

That means the nation's highest court could yet strike down what has been for religious groups and some business owners the most controversial part of the law.

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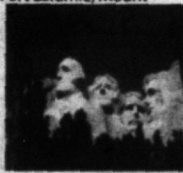
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SUDAN

cont. from p. 1

Criticism of the church in Sudanese media has encouraged Islamic extremists to call for aggressive government action to rid Sudan of Christianity, according to Morning Star, and a group called Al Qaeda in the Nile States is threatening violence

against the church.

Members of the Sudan Embassy in Ethiopia intercepted the baptized Christian at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport as she tried to leave the country, and her current fate reportedly has not been revealed. Government officials arrested a Khartoum travel agent accused of trying to help the convert leave Sudan unbeknownst to her Muslim family.

CHALLENGE

cont. from p. 1

■ **Brad Van Cleave** (co-chairman), student and recreation minister at First Church, Magee.

■ **Brandon Lewis**, youth minister at First Church, Oxford.

■ **Chris Robbins**, assistant to the director of First Priority of South Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

■ **Danny Forrest**, youth minister at First Church, Richton.

■ **Jake Waits**, youth pastor at Friendship Church, Grenada.

"We want Mississippi Baptist churches to bring their students each year to hear the Gospel and to learn how to reach out to their friends and schoolmates who may not be believers. It's called 'Youth Evangelism Challenge' because we want to challenge students to share the

Gospel with as many unsaved people as possible when they return home."

Lum thanked the staff and administration of Mississippi College for hosting YEC. Mississippi College is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

"The school has hosted the event for many years, and we are awed each year by their openness and their willingness to be a part of this soul-saving effort," Lum said.

The 2013 Youth Evangelism Conference will be held Dec. 30-31 in A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton. For more information, contact Lum at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: dlum@mbcb.org. Web site: www.mbcb.org.

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

NOVEMBER 16-
DECEMBER 3, 2012

HONORS

Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Balfour Lipscomb
Rev. Billy Brumfield
Lucille Hilderbrand SSC, Immanuel BC
Joy Carpenter
Mary Lou Barlow
Casey Childress
Rex & Nell Coward
Pat Conerly
Mr. & Mrs. Henry W. Darden Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Dale
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Parman
Bridgette L. Davis
Tom Davis
Dr. & Mrs. John Douglas
Dr. & Mrs. Jay Douglas
Mr. & Mrs. Howard Duer
Douglas Allen
Mrs. Dorothy Gilbert
Mr. & Mrs. Balfour Lipscomb
Mr. & Mrs. E. J. Grisham
Lydia SSC, FBC Clinton
Fred Hall
Mr. & Mrs. R. N. Humphreys
Mrs. Sue Hall
Mr. & Mrs. Dewey C. Sanford
Ray & Frankie Heard
Janet E. Aldridge
Mr. & Mrs. W. S. Heaton
Mr. & Mrs. Hank F. Peebles
Joel J. Henderson
Cindy Massey

Mrs. Mary Hodges
Jerusalem BC
Pat Hubbard
Mammie Lockhart
SSC, FBC Magee
Betty Kelly
Upper Room SSC,
Neshoba BC
Mr. & Mrs. David W. Lacy
Stephan & Angela Harris
Mrs. Jackie Lee
Ms. Janice Thames
Ms. Shannon Lee
Mrs. Janice Thames
Rev. Greg Mangum
Lucille Hilderbrand
SSC
Libby Matthews
Mary Lou Barlow
Mrs. Theresa McDaniel
Ms. Janice Thames
Mrs. Charlotte McDonnell
Joy & Tommy McMahan
Mr. & Mrs. Victor McMahan
Linda Milner
Mary Lou Barlow
Mrs. Jo Willie McNeil
Mr. & Mrs. Balfour Lipscomb
Dr. & Mrs. Jim Nunnelee
Mr. & Mrs. Dewey C. Sanford
Brownie Peden
Billie White
Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Folk
Mr. & Mrs. Dewey C. Sanford
Adrian Strickland Family
Warren & Becky Strickland
Barry Strickland Family
Warren & Becky Strickland
Gray Strickland Family
Warren & Becky

Strickland
Mr. Walter Taylor
Kirk Taylor
Ms. Jessica Teston
Ms. Janice Thames
Suzanne Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Dewey C. Sanford
Dr. & Mrs. Victor Walsh
Mr. & Mrs. Balfour Lipscomb
Mr. & Mrs. Steve Warren
Mr. & Mrs. Balfour Lipscomb
Carol Watts
Buddy & Linda Meyer
Mrs. Dorothy Weeks
Ladies Class,
Springdale BC
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Wood
Mr. & Mrs. Hank F. Peebles
Billy and Martha Woods
Mr. & Mrs. Dewey C. Sanford

NOVEMBER 16-
DECEMBER 3, 2012

MEMORIALS

Julian Allen
Frank & Sandra Crosthwait
Mrs. Sarah Allred
Jimmy & Jo Jenkins
Michael Alvarez
Arthur & Alicia Powell Burnett
Daniel Keith Ashley
Hertber E. Felter
Louise Alford Bacot
Holly Alford
Marjorie Balkcom
Harold & Joy Smith
Mr. William Barron
Linda Campbell
Chris Baggerly
Buddy & Linda Meyer
K. K. Johns Biggee
Mr. & Mrs. Mickey Hale
Willard Earl Blair
Gerald & Betty Wigington
Mildred Boggan
Barbara Easterling
Barbara M. Bounds
Mr. & Mrs. C. Scott Bounds
Mrs. Phillip D. Brady
Mrs. Waldo Hitt
Mickey & Judy B. Hale
Elizabeth Breakfield
Bill & Eva Moree
Wilford Britt
Bill & Dianne Hathorn
Lois Brooks
Doris Young
Frank Brown
John Dell Hucabee
Bettie Gail Meek
Nancy Shows
Mr. Joe Brunson
Mr. Donny Wilson
Family
William C. Bryan
Jim & Edna Earl Thomason
Mrs. James Wingate
Marvis Bryant
Mrs. Betty B. Carlisle
Mrs. Deborah Busching
Danny & Gwen Daves
Mrs. Jerry Burge
Daniel & Dianne Smith
Mrs. Ivan Burton
Mrs. Joy B. Roberts
William "Bill" Collum Bryan
Tom & Rebecca Tardy



Thank you to the students, parents and staff involved with the Rankin Co. School District Extended Day Enrichment Program for their extreme generosity toward the India Nunnery Campus in Star. They gave money, donated gift cards and provided lots of supplies to help meet the children's needs. A special thank you to Mrs. Sherry Thompson for her leadership in this project.



Christmas ornaments with encouraging notes sent in by donors on display at the Farrow Manor Campus in Coldwater. Pictured are houseparents, Kay West and Felecia Allen.

Jennifer Studebaker
Walter & Polly Watkins
Park Lane Place Assn
Lester Hailey
Elizabeth Steen
Mr. & Mrs. John M. Dean Jr.
Wirt & Mary Yerger
Rosemary & Don Seago
Ray Butler
Ted & Nancy Skipper
Mack Campbell
Linda Campbell
John Campbell
Winnie Carlisle
Mrs. Betty B. Carlisle
Bobbie Carmichael
Mr. & Mrs. M. P. Busby
Ruth Chapman
Van & Ruth Bailey
Archie Chesser
Shelia Huffman

Mrs. Hazel Champion
Mile & Marsha Domino
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Childs
Glynn & Jean Jones
Mr. Nelson T. Chisholm
Jesse & Josie Guess
Noah Charles "Charlie" Christmas
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Stanford
Susan & Pat Denton
Mr. & Mrs. John Veazy
Gale N. Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Buzzy Smith
KJN Properties LLC
Mr. & Mrs. Mack Archer
Margaret H. Clark
Midway BC, Adult Choir
Tom & Bettye Coward
Mr. Robert G. Clemts & Family

Lane Wigington
Kaye Hilderbrand
Donna Cochran
Chris & Sandra Federick
Mrs. Mary Collins
Bo & Bobbie Sue Bowen
Paul & Sharon Ervin
Ms. Doris Cook
Jerusalem BC
Beuna Cooper
Michael & Shirell Betts
Carl & Eunice Woolery
Adult Men's SSC, Springfield BC
Mary E. Stuart
Mr. John Curlee
Jerry & Rose Ann Ivey
Barbara Easterling
Martha Johnson Cushman
Carol & Jim Brents

Value All Human Life • Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 1:15-17; Psalm 139: 13-16; Mark 10:13-16

I think it is very appropriate for us to deviate from our study of Amos to give emphasis to the "Sanctity of Human Life." Today has been set aside by many churches as a special day to be advocates for the unborn and to the value of all human life. Our desire as Christians is to permeate our culture with the biblical teachings regarding the sanctity of human life. The Bible passages chosen for our study lead us to an understanding of the reasons we are to value human life as a gift from God.

Affirm Life's Value (Genesis 1: 26-27)

One of the strongest arguments for the value of human life comes from Genesis 1: 26-27. The Creator of the universe formed man in His own image. Being created in the image of God should be considered an honor. Because of this, life should not be taken for granted or dealt with in a flippant manner. The world in which we live has fostered an environment in which life has little or no value. People are murdered every day for pocket change and, as we are far too familiar with, innocent children are gunned down for revenge or out of anger. Because we are created in the image of God, we are to set a high value on life, whether it is the just-formed embryo of an unborn

child or an elderly person. Remember what God said in Genesis 1:31 after He had finished creation: "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." (HCSB)

Respect and Protect Life (Exodus 1: 15-17)

Exodus 1 focuses on setting the stage for God's protection of Moses, the Israelites' future deliverer. Yet from this passage we also see, through the dilemma that the midwives faced, a clear picture of God's teachings to His people concerning the value of human life. Pharaoh's instructions to them were to kill every male child that was born to an Israelite woman. Because they feared God, they refused. They had been taught to value all human life, especially the innocent. The Egyptians were known to practice population control of their captives by killing all the newborn males. When you realize this, you can see the connection between this event and later



Explore the Bible with Huey Dedmon

on, when Pharaoh's own son dies during the time of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt. God used a common practice of the Egyptians to set His people free from Egyptian slavery. Our world needs some "mid-wives" who will seek ways to lead our world to value and respect all of human life. We will boldly demonstrate our devotion to God when we stand up and speak up against the world's efforts to cheapen and destroy those who are vulnerable and need an advocate.

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Celebrate Life's Purpose (Psalm 139: 13-16)

The attitude or lack of value of human life we experience in our world today comes from a lack of understanding and belief in the existence of God Himself. Because of that disbelief or lack of understanding, many do not see that life has purpose and meaning. David, in Psalm 139, celebrates the mystery of how life is formed and

brought into the world. He states his limited understanding of life itself, yet he chooses to praise God for its wonder. David was in awe of how God had "knit" him together in his mother's womb. Even before he had any form, God knew him and had a plan for his life. Part of the mystery and wonder of life is in how life is formed, but the other part lies in the discovery of the plan God has for us.

Follow Jesus' Example (Mark 10: 13-16)

This classic example from the life of Christ is a simple one to understand. Little children had come to see Jesus and the disciples saw them as a nuisance, or they could have been trying to protect Jesus. Jesus quickly corrected their thinking and taught them a profound lesson on the makeup of the Kingdom of God. Being like a child has been defined in many ways, but most likely it means we come to God just as we are. A child has no monetary gifts, no developed talent, and no desire to impress Jesus. Jesus valued them and values us so much that He will give each of us time in His presence.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education/Outreach at Brandon Church, Brandon.

Obadiah: A Message of God's Justice • Obadiah 1-21

Practically incognito, Obadiah steps out of the woodwork, announces his brief (but scathing) message against Esau/Edom and then disappears into thin air. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. The meaning of his name is our only clue concerning his identity and ancestry. Someone (probably his father) was inspired to name him "worshipper and servant of Yahweh." Obadiah certainly fulfilled his name. First, this worshipper of Yahweh received a barn burning vision from their intimate time spent together. Then, this servant of Yahweh stood firmly with courage to share that vision with the intended listeners. His proclamation to them rings true for us this very day: the words "pride" and "fall" do not rhyme at all, but they march together in perfect cadence. I have entitled his message: "In Deflation of Air-rogance."

This prophetic word from God through Obadiah was a stiff rebuke against Esau/Edom, the people dwelling in the mountainous country located in the UN-promised land southeast of the Dead Sea. Today, this area is located southeast of Israel in the country of Jordan. The famous city of Petra (meaning rock) is located there. Many have called Petra the silent city of the forgotten past, geological proof that the word of God is always fulfilled. These folks were descendants

of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. With the help of their mother, Rebekah, Jacob tricked Esau out of his birthright and his blessing. Esau and Jacob began their squabble inside the womb of their mother. Presently, their struggle continues in the lives of their descendants in the Middle East and around the world. The last known act these twin boys agreed upon was to attend the funeral of their father, Isaac.

Approximately 1400BC, Esau/Edom said to Moses and the wilderness wanderers, "No, you can't pass through our land, you'll just have to go around!" Details of this encounter are found in Numbers 20:14-21. This vision of Obadiah seems to be looking backward to the fateful day in 586 BC when Judah (Son of Jacob, Southern Kingdom of Israel) was taken captive by Babylon. They stood by and watched while Babylon marched into Jerusalem and hauled away a whole nation of their brethren. They even held their brothers as prisoners while they were in

transit to Babylon. Afterward, Esau/Edom helped themselves to the abandoned treasures and even gloated over their misfortune. This vision also appears to be looking forward to the day when Esau/Edom would be judged for their participation in the victory and success of that capture of Judah by Babylon.

Esau/Edom thought they had won the day. They had been deceived by their own pride and arrogance. Living in the high mountains gave them

a sense of false personal security which morphed into supposed military superiority. They assumed they were in the cat-

bird seat, certain victors over any approaching enemy. Obadiah's vision announced their coming defeat. Sin, lie, pride...these words have one thing in common... "I" is in the middle of them! There can be only One "I" Am. Their pride and arrogance was high, wide and consecutively heart deep. They would not live happily ever after with that haughty spirit. God would

see to it. He had a plan for His people.

Obadiah's vision concludes with three final scenes. The house of Jacob will possess their possessions. The house of Jacob will be as a fire. The house of Jacob will ascend Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, for the kingdom will belong to the Lord. God knows the plans He has for His people.

This lesson bears a modern day message for us. Each year in January, our convention recognizes the importance of the sanctity of life. From conception to natural death, life is precious and should be protected. In 2013, we mark the 40th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in the case of Roe versus Wade. Since 1973, abortion has been legal in America. Three thousand (3000) babies PER DAY have lost their lives inside the womb through the choice of their own mothers. Presently, the total number of abortions exceeds 50 million. Our nation has chosen to usurp the authority of God over life and death. Such a decision is not ours to make. God did not ignore the arrogant acts of Esau/Edom. Neither will He ignore this blatant arrogance of our nation. God will vindicate those who are His own. God has always been pro-life.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



Trend dismissing homosexuality as sin moving upward

NASHVILLE (BP) — The percentage of Americans who believe homosexuality is a sin has fallen in the past year, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

A November 2012 survey of adults in the United States found 37% affirm a belief that homosexual behavior is a sin, a statistically significant change from a September 2011 LifeWay Research survey asking the same question. At that time, 44% answered, "Yes."

In contrast, the percentage of Americans who do not believe homosexuality is a sin remains nearly the same between the two surveys — 43% in September 2011 and 45% in November, with an increase in the percentage of those unsure what they believe. Seventeen percent in the November 2012 survey answered "I don't know," an increase of four percent over the September 2011 survey.

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, pointed out that halfway between the two polls President Barack Obama changed his pre-election position concerning gay marriage.

"The president's evolution on homosexuality probably impacted the evolution of cultural values — there is a real and substantive shift, surprisingly large for a one-year time frame — though this was hardly a normal year on this issue," Stetzer said.

The November 2012 survey also found that Americans in the South (40%) are the most likely to select "Yes" to the question "Do you believe homosexual behavior is a sin?" as are Americans who attend religious services at least about once a week (61%) and those calling themselves "born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian" (73%).

Americans who never attend religious services are the most likely to say they do not believe homosexual behavior is a sin (71%).

These findings from LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, come as Atlanta pastor Louie Giglio on Jan. 10 withdrew from giving the benediction at President Obama's upcoming inauguration in the face of criticism over a 15-year-old sermon referencing homosexuality as a sin.

Stetzer noted the connection, saying, "The culture is clearly shifting on homosexuality and this creates a whole new issue: How will America deal with a minority view, strongly held by evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, and so many others?"

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, noted that the shift in viewpoint reflects a correlation between "faith and attitudes about homosexual behavior."

"The survey challenges the church to make sure she continues to teach the faithful about the Bible's teachings on homosexual behavior," Duke told Baptist

Press. "It also provides clear evidence of the importance of the church to the moral framework of the nation. We must redouble our efforts to win the lost and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who taught that not one jot or tittle would pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

"God's Word still speaks clearly to the issue of homosexual behavior — it is sin," the Southern Baptist ethicist said. "We must make sure we share this message in a way that communicates our genuine concern for those struggling with same-sex attractions. God has a better plan for their lives. We want them to experience it."

Bob Stith, a Texas pastor who served several years as Southern Baptists' national strategist for gender issues, commented in similar fashion to Baptist Press, "The real danger here is not so much the view of homosexuality as it is the decline in the confidence of the American people in the trustworthiness of Scripture."

"Some have been saying for years that this issue is the watershed issue for the church in this generation, not because of homosexuality per se but as an indicator of the degree to which the American public truly believes the Bible to be the Word of God," Stith said. "We have gone as a people from a broad and general trust in the Bible to a nation that questions whether there really is any such thing as absolute truth."

Such trends, Stith said, "have opened the door for gay apologists to cast doubt on what the Bible really says about homosexuality. Southern Baptists must do a better job of addressing these claims. Failure to do so will further undermine confidence in the Bible."

Stith also commented on "the manner in which the subject is handled in the entertainment media. It isn't just that it is one-sided. Those who hold to a scriptural view of homosexuality are consistently portrayed as being hate-filled and ignorant."

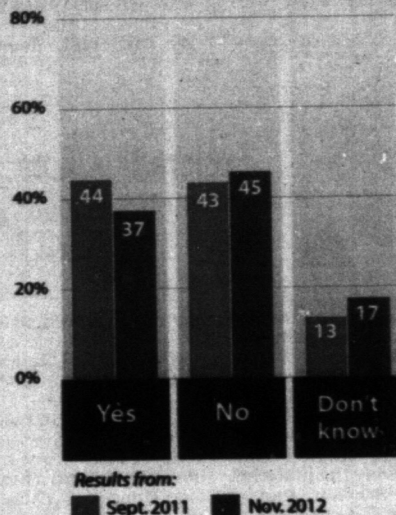
"Evangelicals must do a better job of teaching our people to hold to a clear biblical position on homosexuality while being consistently compassionate and redemptive in our approach, but we must also accept the reality that no matter how loving and compassionate we are, many in the culture will vilify us if we dare say the Bible really does speak of homosexual acts as sin."

"Louis Giglio is only the latest example of this."

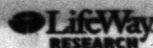
Editor's note: Methodology for the LifeWay Research survey on homosexuality: An online panel representing the adult population of the United States was sampled from Nov. 14-16, 2012. Responses were weighted by region, age, ethnicity, gender, and education to reflect the population. The completed sample of 1,191 surveys provides a 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus .9%. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.

Among Americans:

Do you believe homosexual behavior is a sin?



Methodology:
 Online surveys representing the adult population of the United States.
 2,144 completed survey Sept. 23-26, 2011 and 1,191 completed survey Nov. 14-16, 2012.
 LifeWayResearch.com



First person: Speaking truth can be dangerous in America

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP) — Georgia pastor Louie Giglio was pressured to step down from offering the benediction at President Obama's upcoming inauguration, due to what has been deemed by some as unacceptable remarks made in a sermon almost 20 years ago.

Giglio, pastor of Passion City Church in Atlanta and founder of Passion Conferences geared toward college students, delivered a sermon at a conference in the mid-90s titled, "The Christian's Response to Homosexuality."

Think Progress, a blog that identifies itself as liberal and associated with the Center for American Progress Action Fund, reported Jan. 9 on Giglio's sermon and described the address as "vehemently anti-gay" and full of "rabidly anti-LGBT views."

In the eyes of homosexual activist groups and apparently the White House, Giglio's transgressions were that he dared not only to articulate the biblical truth that homosexuality is categorized as sin, but he

also called attention to the true nature of the activists' goals.

In reality, the only transgression with which Giglio could be charged is being right. He not only was theologically correct, but he also was spot-on concerning the sociological goals of the homosexual movement.

I listened to Giglio's sermon, and what I heard was a very even-handed treatment of a controversial subject in which he stressed compassion for those who were struggling with homosexuality.

At the outset of the sermon, which was part of a series of messages keeping with the theme, "In Search of a Standard," Giglio stressed that the issue of homosexuality was complex and this particular message was designed to "discover what God has to say about this issue and to challenge the church to respond to this issue with truth and grace."

Giglio bent over backwards to season his comments with grace and compassion. At one point he said that Christians should avoid railing against the homosexual movement with intolerance and insensitivity.

Rather than single out homosexuality as some special sin, Giglio really sought to include the behavior along with many others

that the Bible also classifies as sinful. He indicated that sin is opting for a behavior that is less than God's best. All people do that, he said, and are in need of God's grace.

Giglio even said God's view of homosexuality is different from his view of homosexual people. "God is opposed to all kinds of sin," he said. "Every homosexual is a person who matters greatly to God and that God loves intensely."

Theologically, Giglio was on target and did an excellent job of articulating the truth. One part of Giglio's sermon that seemed especially irritating to homosexual activists was when he described the modern homosexual movement and its sociological goals.

"You've got to be able to respond lovingly yet firmly to this aggressive element in the homosexual community," Giglio said, "and I dare say you've got to be willing to be called an intolerant bigot or a homophobe in our society, because you will."

He added, "I daresay as a result of sharing this talk I will." That proved to be prophetic. Not only was he apparently asked to relinquish his spot on the inaugural program, but he has been vilified. Writing on Americablog, John Aravosis called Giglio "an antigay bigot." Wayne Besen, founder of Truth Wins Out, said

he had "backward views on L.G.B.T. people." In The Washington Post, columnist Jonathan Capehart called Giglio's statements "antigay" and "bigoted."

If you take a public stand against the effort to mainstream homosexuality, you will be subject to attack. I know, because in my columns I dare to oppose the idea that homosexuality is natural, normal, and healthy. I have been on the receiving end of numerous letters and e-mails filled with vile threats.

I was once even told to my face by an activist, "We will shut you [meaning conservative Christians] up!"

The only place I might take issue with Giglio is he seemed a bit apologetic and said that addressing homosexuality has not been in his "range of priorities in the past fifteen years."

Pastor, you do not need to express one shred of regret. You were right on all counts.

Boggs is a weekly columnist for Baptist Press, director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention's office of public affairs, and editor of the Baptist Message, news journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He can be contacted at editor@baptist-message.com.



BOGGS